

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3964

S E C R E T ATHENS 4079

EXDIS

FOR ASST. SECY. HARTMAN ONLY FROM CHARGE'

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP (KISSINGER, HENRY A)

SUBJECT: SECRETARY'S STOP AT SOUDA BAY

REF: STATE 99044

1. I SAW BITSIOS THIS MORNING AND TOLD HIM THAT, CONTRARY TO HIS UNDERSTANDING, SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS WERE NOT OUR SOLE REASON FOR PREFERRING SOUDA BAY TO RHODES FOR THE SECRETARY'S REFUELING STOP. BITSIOS SAID THAT HE HAD ASSUMED THERE WERE OTHER FACTORS INVOLVED. GREEK GOVERNMENT WAS IN ANY EVENT PLANNING FOR A STOP AT SOUDA AND WOULD MAKE ALL NECESSARY ARRANGEMENTS. NOTING THAT THE SECRETARY WOULD BE SEEING CAGLAYANGIL IN NAIROBI, I SAID TO BITSIOS THAT THE STOPOVER IN SOUDA WOULD PROVIDE AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY FOR FURTHER EXCHANGE OF VIEWS WITH THE SECRETARY. INDEED, IT SEEMED TO ME THAT IF BITSIOS DID NOT GO TO CRETE TO GREET THE SECRETARY PERSONALLY HIS ABSENCE WOULD BE NOTED AND VERY PROBABLY MISCONSTRUED IN WAYS DISADVANTAGEOUS TO US-GREEK RELATIONS. BITSIOS DISAGREED WITH THIS, SAYING THAT THE SECRETARY'S STOPOVER WOULD BE VERY BRIEF AND, FURTHERMORE, THAT FOR HIM TO MEET THE SECRETARY AT A US FACILITY WOULD PROVIDE AMMUNITION TO THOSE IN GREECE WHO OPPOSED CLOSE GREEK-US RELATIONS. I SAID TO BITSIOS THAT SOUDA AIRFIELD, AS HE KNEW, WAS A SHARED FACILITY AND THE HELLENIC AIR

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FORCE WAS USING IT FAR MORE THAN THE US NAVY. IF THE

GREEK GOVERNMENT PREFERRED TO GREET THE SECRETARY ON
THE HELLENIC AIR FORCE SIDE OF THE FIELD I FORESAW NO
PROBLEM FROM OUR STANDPOINT. BITSIOS SAID THAT HE WOULD
THINK ABOUT THE MATTER FURTHER, BUT WAS STILL INCLINED
TO THINK THAT UNNECESSARY CRITICISM WOULD BE SPARKED
WERE HE TO GO TO CRETE. IN ANY CASE, HE WOULD BE
SEEING THE SECRETARY IN THE NEAR FUTURE AT OSLO.
MEANWHILE, HE WOULD LET ME KNOW IF HE HAD FURTHER
THOUGHTS ON THE MATTER.
STEARNS

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